

Forward Into a Faithful Future

By Keith Boyette – Wesleyan Covenant Association – January 15, 2021

<https://wesleyancovenant.org/2021/01/14/forward-into-a-faithful-future/>

Launched in October 2016, the Wesleyan Covenant Association's mission has evolved with events. We have never wavered in upholding the Lordship of Jesus and the authority of Scripture over our individual and corporate lives. We have been passionate in our commitment to the great confessions of the Christian faith and the ethics that flow from them. Our goal has been to remain focused on the whole reason for the church – to share the Gospel with a hurting and lost world.

We celebrated the decision of The United Methodist Church's 2019 special General Conference to continue to uphold our church's historic teachings on the definition of marriage and ordination standards. Failure to do so would have signaled a significant departure from the settled teachings of the church universal for more than two thousand years. Yet we continue to be very aware of the deep divisions in the UM Church. Most United Methodists now concede that our differences are irreconcilable and that a peaceful separation is the best way forward.

As events have evolved a key part of our mission has been to prepare for a new, global Methodist church steeped in Scripture and the life-affirming teachings of classical Christianity. The WCA Council has adopted and continues to revise a [draft Book of Doctrines and Discipline](#) to undergird the new church, and it has endorsed the adoption of the [Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace through Separation](#) that provides for the creation of two or more new denominations.

Working with other theologically conservative Methodists from around the world, the WCA has been instrumental in resourcing a [Transitional Leadership Council \(TLC\)](#) for a new global Methodist church that will be launched with the adoption of the Protocol. The TLC has met weekly since late March of 2020 and has adopted transitional governing documents for the new denomination. It will lead the new church until it

is able to hold its first convening conference where it will determine a process for electing and appointing its leaders.

The WCA and its allies are focused on the ministry and mission of this new denomination where we will make disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly. We are not waiting for the launch of the new denomination to engage in ministry. Teams are already at work focused on accountable discipleship, church multiplication, church revitalization, global missional partnerships, ministry with marginalized communities, and ministry with youth and young adults.

We will be passionate about introducing people to Jesus and encouraging them to become His fully devoted disciples who then make new disciples. Our churches will focus on reproducing globally so that we share the Gospel with the whole world. We are invested in being a truly global church where we work as true partners across the continents each offering the gifts and abilities God has entrusted to us.

This year we have created additional task force groups to prepare a catechism of essential beliefs, address racial and ethnic equality issues, create statements regarding our theology of the sacraments, and address the challenges facing the church in the 21st century. We also have groups working on a host of practical issues like property and casualty insurance for local churches and health insurance and pension benefits for clergy and lay employees. Solid work on such matters will enable the new church to move forward quickly on a number of fronts.

We are engaged almost daily in conversations with leaders in Africa, Asia, and Europe as we prepare together for the launch of a global church. And we have raised resources for the new church's critical transitional phase and its convening conference. We will share more about this important effort throughout the year.

With justification, some people wonder why we have not already launched the new church. Our goal is to create a pathway that will allow

theologically conservative local churches to align with the new denomination free of the UM Church's trust clause. While the trust clause remains in force, local churches are faced with the dilemma of either leaving the denomination without their property and assets, paying exorbitant exit fees in order to retain them, or engaging in costly litigation with the UM Church over who is entitled to them. Given these options, it is not surprising that only a handful of local churches have left the denomination.

However, under the terms of the Protocol agreement, local churches will be allowed to leave the UM Church without financial penalties or exit fees. They can then freely align with the new theologically conservative denomination where they will no longer hold their property in trust for a general church; they will become the sole owners of their property and assets. But of course these conditions will not prevail until the Protocol's implementing legislation is passed at a General Conference. While we are as frustrated as others by the pandemic induced delay of the conference, we think it would be unwise, and very costly for many local churches, to launch a new denomination before the Protocol agreement has been duly adopted by a General Conference.

Despite our frustrations over the delay, we are confident our movement will grow and become stronger in 2021. As the year progresses, we anticipate meeting with you virtually and then in-person in order to share more information about how local churches will decide to transition to a new global Methodist church. We invite you to be bold in sharing information about the new church with others, and please know the WCA will continue to prepare for a future we can all walk into together.

We appreciate your prayers, encouragement, and support. God bless you.

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